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Office of Transition Initiatives

AFGHANISTAN



OTI MISSION STATEMENT

To support U.S. foreign policy objectives by helping local partners advance peace and democracy in priority countries in crisis. Seizing critical windows of opportunity, OTI works on the ground to provide fast, flexible, short-term assistance targeted at key political transition and stabilization needs.

FAST FACTS

Start Date: March 2012
Budget: \$161 million (ceiling)
\$67 million (obligated)

USAID/OTI

<http://www.usaid.gov>

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) and Creative Associates International, Inc. (Creative) launched the Community Cohesion Initiative (CCI) in March 2012. CCI follows from and builds upon OTI's previous programmatic iteration, the Afghanistan Stabilization Initiative (ASI). The program operates at the district level in Regional Command East (RC-E), Regional Command South (RC-S), and Regional Command Southwest (RC-SW) and seeks to increase resilience in areas vulnerable to insurgent exploitation by:

1. Strengthening ties between local actors, customary governance structures, and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA).
2. Increasing cohesion between and among communities.

This quarterly report covers the period of project performance for CCI's activities from 1 October 2012 to 31 December 2012.

PROGRAM AREAS

The program focuses on strategically important districts within Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces in the South, Helmand in the Southwest and Ghazni, Khost and Kunar in the East.

Creative and the OTI Country Team work together closely under a 'one-team' approach to create and update district workplans, which guide CCI's grant activity implementation and strategic approach. These workplans are based on CCI's national strategy, goals, and objectives; as well as the strategic and operational objectives of civ-mil efforts in its areas of operations. CCI activities are multi-sectoral and aim to achieve national objectives by addressing the specific priorities, problems and grievances of local communities and supporting community-based resiliencies. Activities center on the implementation of clusters of small grant projects, such as stabilization and cohesion jirgas, strategic communications support to GIRoA to improve and extend their messaging, capacity building and skills training, small infrastructure rehabilitation, equipment procurements, and cultural events. The relationship and coordination aspect that CCI facilitates between district-level GIRoA and communities plays an equal role in increasing community resiliencies and communication as the end product of the grant activity.

COUNTRY SITUATION

It is an opportune and challenging time for CCI in Afghanistan as the country moves deeper into a state of transition and braces for the withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), elections, and a change in the security posture under the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). While these dynamics clearly justify the presence of OTI as a key transition player, they also present a host of challenges for CCI, from a lack of clarity on GIRoA and USG strategy to departures of key staff and concerns over deterioration in security.

Military Handover

Afghanistan and the United States continue to negotiate the U.S. footprint beyond 2014, likely to include an agreement on 6,000-20,000 U.S. troops remaining in Afghanistan beyond 2014. President Karzai will travel to the United States in 2013 to meet with President Obama and other USG officials to discuss a security agreement, U.S. aid commitment, elections and the overall transition.

Political Negotiations

Recent reports of the Taliban engaging with mainstream politics, and possibly even the upcoming elections, have been reported in the media. In December, the Taliban and several mainstream Afghan political parties met in Paris. The Taliban traveled on GIRoA-sanctioned passports, which GIRoA claimed as an indication of their willingness to negotiate with the Afghan Government. These discussions did not result in a concrete way forward for the two sides.

GIRoA Handover

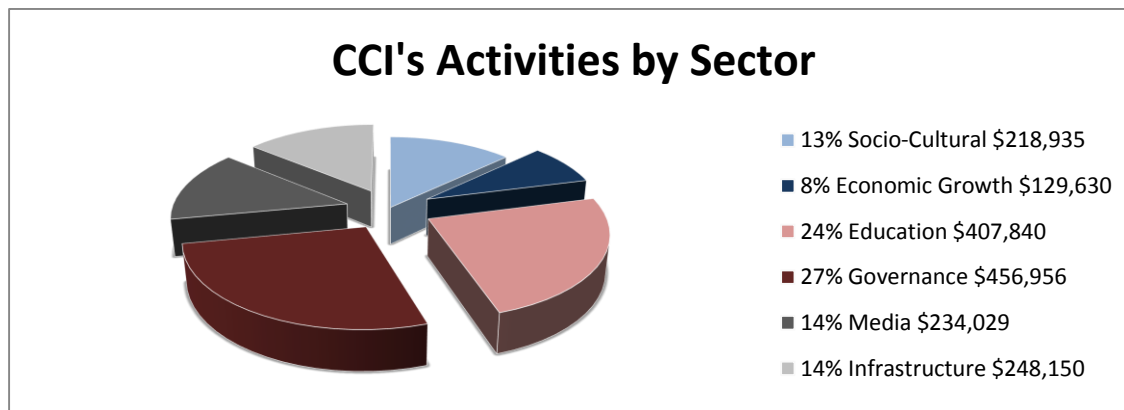
Development funding by the U.S. military is decreasing, further complicating the dynamics of programming in the areas of CCI operation, particularly where corrupt officials are looking to maximize or consolidate their benefits before funding is reduced or ceases to exist. Despite donor efforts, GIRoA continues to have capacity shortfalls and is frequently an unreliable partner at the Provincial and District levels. International bodies have started to track the export of wealth more closely. This is a significant issue of concern due to a large number of high ranking government officials moving their wealth abroad and in several instances setting up homes in Dubai and other places. In the short to midterm, there is an expectation that many Afghans will follow suit.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Event
6-8 January	Dubai Four Corners Strategy Meeting
17 February	Begin Revising/Updating District Workplans
4-7 March	Strategic Review Session (SRS)

GRANTS SUMMARY

Since March 2012, OTI, through its implementing partner, Creative Associates, has cleared, completed or closed 73 small grants, totaling \$1.6 million. The breakdown by sector is as follows:



- During 2012, CCI cleared 73 grants activities, worth \$1,661,185.
- During 2012, CCI disbursed \$112,576 for project activities.
- During 2012, CCI completed ten activities.
- During 2012, CCI closed seven activities.

ACTIVITIES

Six activities were completed or closed since the last Quarterly Report. These projects ranged from Community Cohesion Jirgas to Municipal Sub-District Office (MSO) Open Houses. The aim of these CCI activities was to achieve a series of district objectives, including: strengthening customary leadership and improving effectiveness of the government by improving legitimacy, inclusiveness, responsiveness, capacity, or reach. Project highlights from completed and ongoing activities include:

Women Take a Stand Against Violence in Zabul Province

CCI partnered with the Zabul Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA) to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 3 December. Held at the DoWA conference hall, the event was attended by 64 women and 20 men. They discussed the impact of violence against women in their communities and encouraged women to cooperate with their local government representatives and continue their education. The event also attracted both local and national media coverage, providing coverage of the event throughout the community. Media coverage included Tolo News, Lamar TV, Afghanistan National TV, ARIANA TV and local radio coverage. One of CCI's programming goals is to connect underserved communities with their local government representation; to this end, participants and viewers were encouraged to work with and utilize DoWA services.



A Department of Women's Affairs representative speaks out against domestic violence.

Municipal Open Houses in Kandahar City Opens Doors

Between 18-20 November, CCI facilitated two Municipal Sub-District Office (MSO) Open Houses. More than 400 community members and 12 municipality officials, including the Sub-District Managers attended the events in MSOs Six and Nine. These CCI-funded grant activities increased public awareness of the services provided by their MSO and improved the MSO's image and visibility within their communities. These project activities also provided venues for community members and their GIRoA representatives to discuss the MSOs' roles and responsibilities. The successful completion of these activities encouraged community members to consider the MSO a venue for positive interactions with GIRoA, effectively improving the linkage between communities and sub-district level government in Kandahar City.



MSO Nine officials and community members attend the MSO Open House.

Community Unity through Dialogue in Khas Kunar District

CCI's Community Cohesion Jirga in Khas Kunar District, Kunar Province, officially commenced on 16 October. The District Governor (DG), District Chief of Police, the district commanders of the of Border Police, Afghan Local Police, head of the District Development Assembly (DDA), and the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG) shura in the district, 100 community members including elders and religious scholars and the head of the district's youth shura attended the event. The three-day jirga introduced the program to the community and allowed the DG to initiate a discussion with district residents on cohesion and the sources of instability in their communities. As an entry grant, the



The DG discusses the stabilizing and destabilizing factors in his district.

cohesion jirga served an important role in CCI's activity development cycle in the district. The Jirga reinforced community-GIRoA resiliencies but it also generated ideas for future CCI activities in the district.

Empowering Tribal Resiliencies and Informal Governance Systems in Qarabagh District

On 18 December, CCI held an opening ceremony for a Community Leaders Conflict Resolution Training in the Qarabagh District Meeting Hall in Ghazni Province. The 80 attendees included the District Governor, members of the Qarabagh DDA, Peace Council members and community elders. Between December and March 2013, this CCI project will formally train 60 leaders in conflict resolution practices and organize three jirgas to empower tribal leaders to build upon and refine the skills that they learn during the training. Through this project, CCI aims to strengthen traditional tribal resiliencies to help mitigate illegitimate rule of law and strengthen communities' resilience against insurgent actors in Qarabagh District.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

During the last quarter, CCI has focused primarily on grant activity development and effectively enhanced the program's capacity to develop, draft and clear grants. Several program development meetings and exercises were held to support this progress. These included a substantial restructuring of the program to enable timely grant development and implementation, the first program "Shura" meeting and the development of standardized district workplans. Field teams comprised of OTI and Creative's staff worked together to write and review district workplans. These teams also set out activity targets for a four-month period. Additional improvements included establishing and updating implementation systems and a concerted push to train and mentor field staff.

These management and operations modifications have already begun to show results. While only five grants were under implementation in September; by the end of the 2012, more than 70 grants had been cleared for implementation, with more than \$1.6 million committed. The number of grants cleared for activity development in December nearly matched the total number of grants cleared during the first nine months of the program.

While the imperative to focus on grant activity implementation remains, CCI is also preparing for a host of upcoming challenges. These include fully staffing and operationalizing the new organizational structure, streamlining internal systems, training and mentoring staff and managing emergent day-to-day challenges. CCI foresees increased security and corruption threats as the program grows and is therefore devoting more time and effort to systems for tracking and overcoming these challenges.

During the next quarter, CCI's leadership will work to hone the program vision and strategy in the context of the transition environment. The next SRS, in early March, will mark the CCI's one-year anniversary. The SRS will help key senior staff to articulate a six-month strategy, and guide CCI towards more focused, quality and innovative programming. In preparation for the SRS, the OTI Country Representative and CCI Chief of Party will be meeting with the DC corners to discuss CCI's strategy, footprint and staffing among other issues. Moving forward, CCI's leadership expects to continue to fine-tune the strategy and program contribution to the U.S. Government's Mission in Afghanistan.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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